



Conversations of the Mind: The Uses of Journal Writing for Second-Language Learners

Rebecca William Mlynarczyk

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Asking students to write journals that reflect on their learning has become a widespread pedagogical practice in recent years. However, the scholarly literature does not address certain key questions about how journal writing aids learning:

- * Is there something inherent in journal writing that encourages students to write reflectively?
- * What psycholinguistic or cognitive factors help to explain the power of journal writing?
- * Why do some students use journals to write prolifically and creatively while others limit their responses to summarizing the assigned course reading?
- * Why do teachers find some journal entries so much more engaging than others?
- * How do teachers' ways of responding to journals affect their students' development as writers and thinkers?

This book addresses such questions through a careful analysis of the journal writing of the students in the author's ESL classes at a large urban college. It contains detailed case studies of five culturally- and linguistically-diverse students with widely differing responses to journal writing.

To teachers of composition for both first- and second-language students and to teachers of graduate courses in education and qualitative research, this book offers a contextualized description of journal writings as a complex social activity. By emphasizing the need for educators to reexamine their pedagogy and to learn from their students, *Conversations of the Mind* is an indispensable contribution to the emerging literature of teacher research and reflective practice.



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